

U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 10/751,478
Response filed March 26, 2007
Reply to OA dated November 24, 2006

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-3, 5-7 and new claim 8 are pending in the application.

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A substrate supporting apparatus comprising:

a housing with a recess formed therein for a rotatable chuck;

the a rotatable chuck, exposed from the recess of the housing, being which is provided at its central portion with a hollow and supporting which supports a substrate, and a cylindrical nozzle member having a nozzle hole and being capable of vertically moving in the hollow of the rotatable chuck, and a gas supply source for supplying gas discharged out from said nozzle hole,

wherein the substrate is held over an upper surface of the chuck in a non-contact state by discharging gas from said nozzle hole and wherein in a state where an upper surface of said nozzle member is held lower than an upper surface of said chuck, a recess serving as a gas flow path is formed in an upper portion of said nozzle hole.

Claim 2 (Original): The substrate supporting apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the nozzle hole is formed in a central portion of said nozzle member.

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Claim 3 (Original): The substrate supporting apparatus according to claim 1, wherein a plurality of pawls are provided on a surface of said chuck which is opposed to said substrate, each of said plurality of pawls being projected substantially in a perpendicular direction with respect to said surface, each of said pawls can move into a state in which said pawls abut against an outer periphery of said substrate and support said substrate, and into a state in which the pawls are separated from the outer periphery of said substrate.

Claim 4: Canceled.

Claim 5 (Original): The substrate supporting apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising means for upwardly moving said nozzle member, said means upwardly moves said nozzle member while discharging gas from the nozzle hole.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): The substrate supporting apparatus according to any one of claims 1 to 3 and 5 to 5, wherein further comprising a fork for holding said substrate, said fork is inserted between an underside of said substrate and the upper surface of said chuck after said nozzle member being upwardly moved while discharging gas from the nozzle hole, and when the discharge of the gas is stopped, said substrate is detached from said substrate supporting apparatus by being held on said fork.

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Claim 7 (Original): The substrate supporting apparatus according to claim 6, wherein said fork has a pair of finger portions, a distance between said pair of finger portions is greater than a diameter of said nozzle member.

Claim 8 (New): The substrate supporting apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the rotatable chuck is solid except for the central portion with the hollow.